A delicious design

In Melbourne's Glen Waverley, Studio Esteta has used rich, vibrant colours to give this cafe and restaurant a memorable and fresh interior.

Design practice —
Studio Esteta

Interior paint finishes —
Taubmans Pure Performance 'Rose Nude' used on general walls, ceilings and doors. Taubmans Pure Performance 'Garnet' used on maitre d' station, waiter's station, cake stand joinery and amenities areas

Photography —
Tessa Ross-Phelan



Melbourne's hospitality offerings just keep getting better and better, and it's no surprise from the world's most liveable city for the seventh year in a row. While its chefs are world-class and the food is some of the finest in Australia, the one thing truly distinguishing most of the Victorian capital's newly opened restaurants and cafes is a high-quality dining experience.

Service is important, as is an inviting interior and savvy restaurateurs have been quick to realise the value good design adds to their business. Consequently, many are working with some of the country's best designers and architects to deliver fitouts nothing short of memorable. This includes Joe La and brothers Nolan and Brian Taing, who recently opened Workshop Brothers in Glen Waverley. The co-owners already operate three other locations and for their fourth, they engaged Melbourne-based Studio Esteta to refurbish the space.

Their brief to Studio Esteta's directors Sarah Cosentino and Felicity Slattery called for a fitout that both complements the contemporary Asian menu and can seamlessly transition from day to night service. Studio Esteta's ensuing interior design is elegant and refined yet welcoming, ultimately drawing inspiration from the clients' Chinese heritage. "We wanted to celebrate themes of family and tradition and the uniting role of food," Cosentino says. "As well as challenge the concept of a stereotypical Chinese restaurant."

Eschewing all unnecessary embellishment, Cosentino uses the circle – significantly a symbol of perfection and wholeness in Chinese culture – as a recurring motif. It's applied to particularly great effect in the fitout's series of limed ply openings. These divide the narrow 135-square-metre space into dining, bar and back-of-house areas, allowing the design to incrementally reveal itself as diners walk through the restaurant. The circle is also repeated in the refurbishment's exquisite detailing, where it features as a mirror near the waiter's station and in the bathroom, as well as in half-moon formations within the legs of the large communal table and bar tables.

A key part of the design concept for Workshop Brothers involved playful reinterpretations of retro Chinese eatery cliches. Furnishings and finishes once thought of as undesirable, including vinyl upholstered chairs, chunky marble countertops and high-gloss surfaces, are given a new lease of life. However, the most striking refresh is the colour palette, where the ubiquitous red-and-gold is re-imagined with sophisticated shades of plum and pink, offset by brass accents.



In choosing Rose Nude for the walls, ceiling and doors, and Garnet for the maître d' and waiter's stations, joinery details and bathroom, Studio Esteta couldn't go past Taubmans. "We've used their Pure Performance in the past and always found the colour selection to be vibrant, varied and on-trend," Cosentino notes. The product is also both versatile and hardwearing, with Rose Nude being mixed through the dining walls' custom textured wall treatment, lending the scheme definitive expression. Certainly, the same outcome couldn't have been achieved with a lesser-quality paint.

Another advantage of using Taubmans is the provision of A4 Colour Brushouts to designers and architects. As Cosentino explains, "In commercial projects, where there are often time constraints, it's not always easy to coordinate with builder, painter and client to make important colour decisions on site. So these hand-painted samples allowed me to refine the overall palette with everyone prior to construction." It made the decision-making process run all the more smoothly and this is undeniably reflected in the interior's stylish aesthetic and timeless appeal.

For more information on coatings or project services: taubmans.com.au/colourcentre

Opposite page — The fitout's vibrant colours were inspired by the clients' Chinese heritage.

Left — Taubmans Pure Performance 'Rose Nude' was used on the walls, ceiling and doors.

Below — Taubmans Pure Performance 'Garnet' was used on the waiter's station.

